

Getting to Know Each Other Spirituality

Chalice Lighting

Sharing of Item That Holds Meaning For Us

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support.

Shared Reading

To laugh is to risk appearing the fool.

To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.

To reach out for another is to risk exposing our true self.

To place our ideas before the crowd is to risk certainty.

To dream aloud is to risk accountability.

To love is to risk not being loved in return.

To hope is to risk despair.

To try is to risk failure.

To reach out is to risk rejection.

To live is to risk dying.

To fear risk is to never live.

Introduce Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Practicing Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

Group Business

Closing Words

Song "Go Now in Peace"

Deep Sharing/Deep Listening

During this time, one person speaks at a time, into an appreciative silence. The only response to the speaker is non-verbal, although the leader may express thanks if that seems comfortable. There is a brief moment of silence between speakers so that we can let the sharing "sink in." Then the next person will share. This may seem awkward or unsupportive at first, but most groups find it very satisfying once they get used to it.

The one who is sharing has the job of speaking deeply from their heart about the topic at hand. Listeners have the task of keeping an open heart to what is shared.

The next speaker has the task of leaving some space before they speak. The leader is responsible for helping speakers remember the time frame they have to speak in.

The speaking may go in any order. It is assumed that everyone in the group will speak, but if someone does not want to speak, they may pass.

In a second "round" everyone who wishes to add second thoughts or thoughts sparked by what was shared may do so. It is not appropriate to ask questions about what someone else shared, only to reflect on what the sharing sparked in oneself. Once again, there should be a bit of silence between speakers.

If everyone has had a chance to speak a second time and there is time remaining, there may be a more conversational time. Those who are speaking should be aware of whether others wish to speak. Once again, the focus should be on what you are thinking and feeling, rather than probing others or attempting to solve problems for them.

Go Now in Peace 413

$\text{♩} = 52$

①

Go now in peace. Go now in peace.

②

③

May the love of God sur-round you ev-ery-where,

④

ev-ery-where you may go.

Words & music: Natalie Sleeth, 1930, based on Luke 2:29,
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GO IN PEACE
Irregular

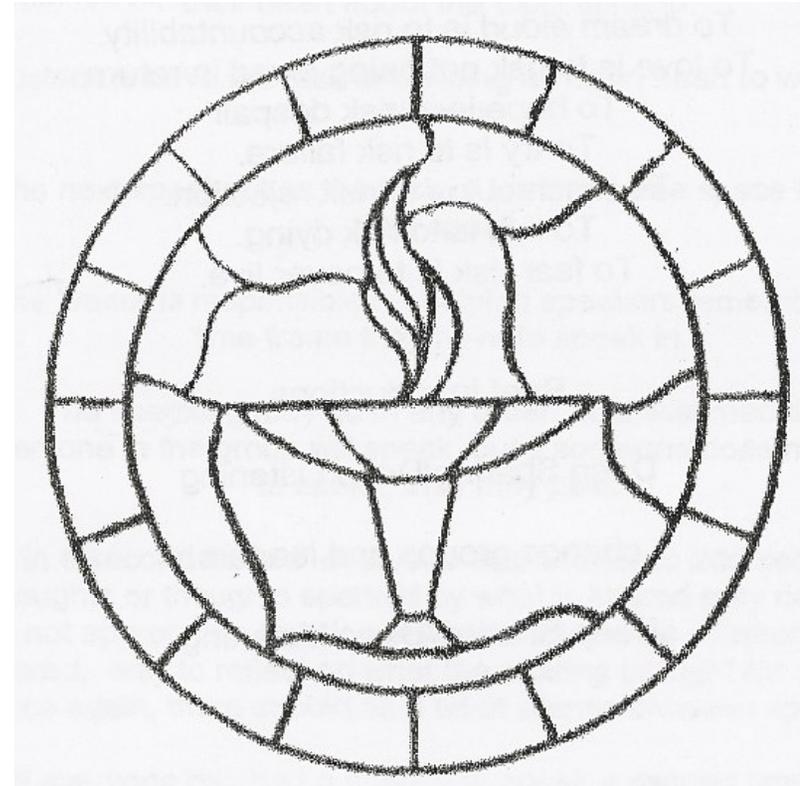
The Covenant

I commit myself:

- To come to meetings when I possibly can, knowing that my presence is important to the group.
- To honor the group by letting the leader know if I will be absent and come to the group one last time and say goodbye if I need to quit
- To share with the leader the responsibility for good group process by watching how much time I take to speak and noticing what is going on for others.
- To not gossip about what is shared in the group, and not tell other people's stories.
- To listen to what others share with an open heart, and to share deeply in my turn.

Covenant Circles

The First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque



Spirituality

Leader's Worksheet

First Meeting

Getting to Know Each Other/Spirituality

Chalice Lighting

As the drops of oil that fill this lamp come together to make their light,
So we individuals come together to make this covenant circle.
United in spirit with those who are present in this group,
With the many who came before, and with generations yet to come,

We light this flame to the community we share
And to its great purpose:
to gather us together,
so that our search for meaning, love, and work, will be fruitful and joyous.

Sharing of Joys and Concerns

To help people get to know each other, we ask you to share something that symbolizes, for you, the deep and meaningful parts of your life. We hope that this will help you to take a little more risk in sharing than you might usually do in a new group.

Silence, holding ourselves and each other in silent support. (give this two minutes. Time it with your watch! End the silence by saying "so be it," or "amen", or "blessed be")

Shared Reading (each person read a line.)

Introducing Deep Sharing/Deep Listening Go over the "rules" on their handout by letting each person read one. End by telling folks that we're about to practice this, and ask if there are any questions.

Practicing Deep Sharing/Deep Listening People will have been invited to bring something that is "spiritual" to them. You and your co leaders should begin, and model sharing what you have brought, taking 3-5 minutes to talk about the item, how you define spirituality, and what is spiritual for you. The more deeply you share, the more deeply your group will share! When the two of you have shared, (leaving space between), allow others to share.

Leaving silent space between sharings will be something the group will learn to do gradually. It's not so important to "enforce" that rule. However, it is CRUCIAL that you do not allow cross talk. If someone begins to respond to a sharing, you must interrupt, and say something like, "remember, we are not responding yet." Be gentle but firm.

The co-leader should stay very aware of the time, glancing at their watch when a new person starts. If they go over 5 minutes, you'll need to help them wind up. ("excuse me Jane, but we want to get to everyone tonight...")

When everyone has shared, the leader can ask if there are second thoughts or if anyone would like to reflect on what they have heard. Remind folks to leave space between sharing.

When this seems to have petered out, tell the group how much time there is left for free discussion. It is important to let the group know "where they are" in the format.

Business: (15 minutes before the time is up)

1. The covenant – Ask people to read the covenant to themselves and see if there are questions. There will likely be questions about the confidentiality section. We don't want to encourage people to think of this as a completely confidential group such as a therapy group might be. We might want to tell others about our experience in the group, and that might include mentioning something that someone else said. What we want to agree with each other is that we are not going to tell other's personal stories outside of the group. Encourage people not to nitpick; a covenant, by its nature, deals in the "spirit", not the "letter".
2. Hand out the next week's "Homework". Tell folks that the "deep sharing" will be on this topic express they hope that they will think about the topic in advance. Remind people that they should contact you if they can't come.
3. If you don't feel comfortable starting the song, "go now in peace," ask if there is someone in the group who can do that.

Closing:

1. get everyone in a circle, holding hands.
2. Ask people to think of one word that says something about how they are feeling or what they hope for in the group.
3. (give them a moment to think).
4. Ask them to, one by one, with space between, say their word into the circle.
5. When that's over, start the song, or catch the eye of your song leader.

Homework for “My Spiritual Life”

Maybe we're also spiritually shy. Ask UU's what their religious history is and they'll never stop talking, but ask about their current religious feelings, practices, hopes, and fears and you'll hear the sound of sheer silence. And since we don't say, we don't know this part of each other's lives very well and we don't get each other's support as much as we might.

But I ask you, what's a church FOR, after all? -from a sermon by Christine Robinson

This cannot be an easy life
We shall have a rugged time of it to keep our minds
open and to keep them deep;
to keep our sense of beauty
and our ability to make it,
and our occasional ability to see it
in places remote and strange and unfamiliar.
We shall have a rugged time of it, all of us--
but this is the condition of life,
and in this condition we can help
because we can love one another.

-J Robert Openheimer

I define spirituality as the ability to see, feel, and live the big picture. It is the ability to feel connected with everything, to suffer gracefully, to keep things in perspective. People who make mountains out of molehills, who live only for the moment, or who can only care about the things and people that directly effect them are secular people, mundane rather than spiritual in their outlook. For some people, the “big picture” will include divinity, an afterlife, and other aspects of reality that are not a part of the physical world. But you can be spiritual without believing in any of these things. There's plenty in this life we share to stay connected to. The fruits of that sense of connection, perspective, and knowledge of the whole are serenity and compassion. –from a sermon by Christine Robinson

Questions to Ponder:

1. Some of these quotes were a part of the first letter you got about being in a Covenant group, lo these many months ago. As you read them now, do you understand them differently?
2. Do you have any practices, habits, or disciplines that help you see, feel, and live the whole picture? What practices would you like to have?
3. Has being in a covenant group been helpful to you? What parts or sessions have been particularly helpful?
4. Is there something that you wish had happened that didn't?
5. What do you find difficult about speaking about your spiritual life?
6. Has this group helped you to keep your mind open, or deep, or to see beauty in strange and unfamiliar places?